



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

WHY OREGON HAS NOT HAD AN ORIENTAL PROBLEM

BY F. G. YOUNG,

Professor of Economics and Sociology, University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore.

Early Oregon did not offer to the Oriental opportunities for exploitation that bore any comparison to those afforded by California. On the discovery of gold San Francisco became the great entrepôt to which all vessels from the Orient turned, and stray delegations from the swarming ports of China were soon borne to the new Eldorado. San Francisco's channels of trade and lines of employment yielded largest streams of gold,—the sole lure of emigrants from the Celestial Empire.

The dearth of women and children among the rapidly growing aggregation of adventurers that constituted the main body of San Francisco's population not only left open to the Chinaman just the vocations for which he shows special aptitudes, but created as well the strongest demand for his services. He came as the complement necessary to make immediately a community out of a horde of the gold-seekers of the fifties. In the older Oregon community to the north the conditions were those of a staid agricultural settlement, quite in contrast to those developed by the mining activities of California. Oregon was made up of transplanted households of home-seekers. It afforded neither an opening nor a considerable demand for the Oriental's services. There was no lure of high wages nor large earnings in any line of employment, nothing to compare with the attractions which the California metropolis held out.

The main lodestone that was soon to draw the large influx of Orientals to California was the gold-bearing gravel beds back of San Francisco along the streams of the Sierras. John Chinaman quickly learned that the income secured through washing these was even larger than the returns from washing dishes or clothes down in the city. So to the recesses of the mountains he flocked and soon accumulated a hoard with which he returned to his native land and became the cause of the coming in turn of many others. Oregon's first instalment of Chinese was received as soon as the placer diggings within her southern borders were disclosed. To these they

came in numbers to constitute a considerable proportion of the early population of her sparsely settled southern counties. But they came direct from California and thither returned without obtruding themselves on the main body of Oregon's population in the Willamette Valley to the north.

Naturally at first Oregon's ratio of Orientals, compared with that of her neighbor's to the south, was small. In the later fifties and sixties, while there was still great activity in placer mining in California, the proportion of Chinese among her population was at least ten times as great as that of Oregon. From the later seventies on, however, the California percentage has not been twice that of Oregon and the census figures for 1900 make the comparative number in California barely larger than that of Oregon. It is to be noted that with a quota of Mongolians constantly growing, so as relatively to be almost equal to that of California, the public mind in Oregon has remained calm while in California there has been continual trepidation.

A more impressive illustration of the comparative equanimity of Oregon in view of her situation is, however, afforded through a comparison of Oregon's quota of Orientals with that of Washington on the north. Oregon has always had a larger contingent of Chinese and Japanese in her population than Washington—and generally it has been two or three times as large. Outbreaks in acts of violence have occurred there, while the people of Oregon have regularly maintained conditions of peace and order.

At no time has public feeling in Oregon run so strong against the Oriental as in the communities to the north and south. Except once or twice, when stirred by sympathy with what was happening among her neighbors, Oregon can hardly be said even to have had a consciousness of the problem. There has been only sporadic agitation instigated by emissaries from without, and no riotous outbreak.

It thus becomes an interesting question to account for a response, so in contrast, to a situation she has largely in common with her neighbors. Oregon's serenity is probably partly due to certain social characteristics of her people and partly to the peculiar circumstances attending the presence of the Orientals within her borders. Oregon has never had any considerable element of ignition tinder in her population in the form of a large body of floating wage-

earners. With such present, and a large element of Orientals, occasion for a conflict is sure to arise. The presence of such elements in San Francisco after the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad and the oncoming of the depression of the early seventies, and likewise in Tacoma and Seattle after the finishing of the Northern Pacific in the period of stagnation in 1885, was necessarily fraught with trouble. A congregated mass of idle white men feeling the pangs of want would resent the slightest competition on the part of an alien race. It would be treated as an intruder. Permanent prejudice would be engendered. When Tacoma effected the expulsion of the Chinese and a faction in Seattle undertook the forcible deportation of them in February, 1886, Portland naturally was stirred. The balance of influence was, however, so clearly on the side of law and order that the mischief-making forces desisted. Because of the slower and more steady development of Oregon no large number of homeless wage-earners have ever been caught adrift here. It is to the absence from her population of a large admixture of such inflammable elements that the lack of any heat of resentment against the Chinamen within her borders is to be attributed. No experience of trouble, no inter-racial clashes from such sources brought to her thought the consciousness of an Oriental problem.

A contributing factor making for immunity from the consciousness of such a problem—and one also of a negative character—is, or rather was, to be found in the sluggish commonwealth spirit in Oregon. The menace to the standard of living of the laboring classes involved in the presence of a considerable body of Orientals has of course been patent to the thoughtful. These have discerned, too, the burden and blight in the presence of an alien social element. But until recently very little facility has been possessed by any class for securing concert of movement for the public welfare. Neither the agency of the state government nor voluntary organization could be brought into requisition for the discussion, investigation and improvement of a social condition. The Oregon people, or any contingent of them, were slow to get together in co-operation for the public welfare. So there was no anticipation of a problem from conditions not wholly normal.

Turning now to the peculiar circumstances that have attended the presence of the Oriental in Oregon: The objective conditions have all been of a nature to leave the resentment of the white man

unaroused. As already mentioned, the first influx sought the placer mines of Southern Oregon. The jealousy of the white miner was shown in a heavy special license tax upon Chinamen engaged in mining and absolutely prohibitive fines upon any trading by them. A constitutional provision adopted in 1857 debarred them from the ownership of mining property. The irritation caused by their presence must, however, have been mollified by the substantial revenues collected from them for a decade in four or five southern counties.

Oregon, in common with the other Pacific coast and intermountain communities, has not been able to draw to any extent upon European immigrants for domestic and other menial services. The manning of the salmon canneries, the furnishing of garden truck for the cities, and the supplying of the "section hands" for the railroads, have also been occupations for which the white wage-earners of this part of the country had no relish. Such vocations were freely accorded to the Mongolians. The Oregon quota of Orientals year in and out has just about sufficed to meet the demand in these undesired employments. The Chinaman has been aptly termed "the nigger of the coast." However, he is far above the Negro in habits of industry, cleanliness and other virtues, and brings no troubles upon himself through pernicious political aspirations. Representative captains of industry here have even urged that there should be a change from the exclusion of the Chinese laborer to a policy of a limited immigration for a term of years in order to supply a desirable labor force for expediting the clearing of areas for farm crops.

Under the present operation of the exclusion policy towards the Chinese no apprehension whatever is felt about them. It is the Japanese whose incoming is not so securely barred and whose power of organization is effective that are regarded as a very probable menace to the future peace and highest destiny of the Pacific coast. They are rising in the industrial scale and are securing leases and even ownership of real estate. Few will deny that if they are given an equal chance with the white man here their stronger social cohesion and more effective co-operation would win for them a permanent foothold. The rapid extension of the fruit growing industry in Oregon would also furnish an opportunity for which the Japanese in California have proven that they have strong adaptation. So with regard to the Japanese, while it can hardly be said that there

is the consciousness of a problem yet in Oregon, it must on the other hand be confessed that to throw open the doors to the inhabitants of Nippon and to order commonwealth affairs wholly on a commercial basis, would probably develop in a few years a situation fraught with a problem of no slight proportions.